

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A method of manufacturing a hydroformed member comprising the steps of:

providing a blank defined by a blank wall;
placing the blank in a die assembly having a die cavity defined by a die surface;
positioning a contact surface of a wall-thinning element offset from the die surface;

expanding the blank by introducing pressurized fluid into the blank to force the blank wall against the die surface and the offset contact surface to form the hydroformed member;

reducing a wall thickness of the blank during the expanding step to form a removable wall section in a portion of the blank wall; and

removing the removable wall section from the blank wall to form an opening in the hydroformed member, wherein the removing step includes striking the removable wall section.

2. (Original) A method as set forth in claim 1 wherein the removing step includes striking the removable wall section multiple times.

3. (Previously presented) A method as set forth in claim 1 wherein the reducing step includes partially fracturing a portion of the blank wall surrounding the removable wall section.

4 - 11 (Cancelled)

12. (Currently amended) ~~A method as set forth in claim 11~~ A method of manufacturing a hydroformed member comprising:

providing a tubular blank defined by a blank wall;

placing the blank in a die assembly having a die cavity defined by a die surface;

positioning a wall-thinning element along the die surface;

introducing pressurized fluid into the blank to force the blank wall against the die surface and the wall-thinning element to reduce the thickness of the blank wall adjacent the wall-thinning element and form a removable wall section in a portion of the hydroformed member; and

removing the removable wall section to form an opening in the hydroformed member, wherein the removing step includes striking the removable wall section, and further wherein the method includes partially fracturing a portion of the blank wall surrounding the removable wall section as the thickness of the blank wall is reduced.

13. (Previously presented) A method as set forth in claim 12 further including removing the hydroformed member from the die cavity prior to removing the removable wall section.

14. (Currently amended) ~~A method as set forth in claim 11~~ A method of manufacturing a hydroformed member comprising:

providing a tubular blank defined by a blank wall;

placing the blank in a die assembly having a die cavity defined by a die surface;

positioning a wall-thinning element along the die surface;

introducing pressurized fluid into the blank to force the blank wall against the die surface and the wall-thinning element to reduce the thickness of the blank wall adjacent the wall-thinning element and form a removable wall section in a portion of the hydroformed member; and

removing the removable wall section to form an opening in the hydroformed member, wherein the removing step includes striking the removable wall section, the method further including positioning a contact surface of the wall-thinning element closer to the center of the die cavity than an adjacent portion of the die surface prior to the introduction of pressurized fluid into the blank.

15. (Currently amended) ~~A method as set forth in claim 11~~ A method of manufacturing a hydroformed member comprising:

providing a tubular blank defined by a blank wall;

placing the blank in a die assembly having a die cavity defined by a die surface;

positioning a wall-thinning element along the die surface;

introducing pressurized fluid into the blank to force the blank wall against the die surface and the wall-thinning element to reduce the thickness of the blank wall adjacent the wall-thinning element and form a removable wall section in a portion of the hydroformed member; and

removing the removable wall section to form an opening in the hydroformed member, wherein the removing step includes striking the removable wall section, the method further including positioning a contact surface of the wall-thinning element further from the center of the die cavity than an adjacent portion of the die surface prior to the introduction of pressurized fluid into the blank.

16. (Currently amended) ~~A method as set forth in claim 4~~ A method of manufacturing a hydroformed member comprising the steps of:

providing a blank defined by a blank wall;

placing the blank in a die assembly having a die cavity defined by a die surface;

expanding the blank to force the blank wall against the die surface and form the hydroformed member;

conforming a portion of the blank wall against a wall-thinning element positioned along the die surface to form a removable wall section in a portion of the blank wall;

removing the removable wall section from the blank wall to form an opening in the hydroformed member; and

moving the hydroformed member out of the die assembly prior to the step of removing the removable wall section from the blank wall to form the opening in the hydroformed member, the method further including positioning a contact surface of the wall-thinning element closer to the center of the die cavity than an adjacent portion of the die surface prior to the introduction of pressurized fluid into the blank.

17. (Currently amended) ~~A method as set forth in claim 4~~ A method of manufacturing a hydroformed member comprising the steps of:

providing a blank defined by a blank wall;

placing the blank in a die assembly having a die cavity defined by a die surface;

expanding the blank to force the blank wall against the die surface and form the hydroformed member;

conforming a portion of the blank wall against a wall-thinning element positioned along the die surface to form a removable wall section in a portion of the blank wall;

removing the removable wall section from the blank wall to form an opening in the hydroformed member; and

moving the hydroformed member out of the die assembly prior to the step of removing the removable wall section from the blank wall to form the opening in the hydroformed member, the method further including positioning a contact surface of the wall-thinning element further from the center of the die cavity than an adjacent portion of the die surface prior to the introduction of pressurized fluid into the blank.

18. (Currently amended) ~~A method as set forth in claim 4~~ A method of manufacturing a hydroformed member comprising the steps of:

providing a blank defined by a blank wall;

placing the blank in a die assembly having a die cavity defined by a die surface;

expanding the blank to force the blank wall against the die surface and form the hydroformed member;

conforming a portion of the blank wall against a wall-thinning element positioned along the die surface to form a removable wall section in a portion of the blank wall;

removing the removable wall section from the blank wall to form an opening in the hydroformed member; and

moving the hydroformed member out of the die assembly prior to the step of removing the removable wall section from the blank wall to form the opening in the hydroformed member, wherein the conforming step includes reducing the wall thickness adjacent the wall-thinning element.